DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 207 008 CS 006 250

AUTHOR Clark, Elvis G.; Davis, Archie D.
TITLE Note-Making with T-Notes.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (26th, New Orleans, LA, April 27-May 1, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; Reading; Review (Reexamination); *Study; *Study Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Note Taking

ABSTRACT

The T-Note system is an easy way for students to take notes, is organized for effective review, and is adaptable because it provides a system for recording five types of information typically presented in the classroom. The student first divides a single loose-leaf notebook page vertically down the middle, and horizontally about one or two inches from the top, creating three areas for recording information. Page numbers, dates, and subjects are recorded in the top portion. Larger ideas or topics are recorded in the left column and further details are recorded in the right column, similar to the major and minor headings in an outline. Technical or key vocabulary are written across the center line with the definitions in the right hand column. When an instructor uses visual aids during a lecture, the student draws the diagram or graph on the left side, with the descriptive terms or labels listed on the right. By using a hole punch, printed handouts can be inserted into the notebook in sequence for more effective review. When reviewing notes, the student can remove the sheets and cover the right hand column, creating a self-test of the major ideas. Each idea can be marked with a plus or minus sign depending on whether the student has mastered the respective information in the right hand column. (HTH)

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Note-Making with T-Notes

A justification of note-taking as it relates to students' success in academic courses has been made by reading and study skills reseachers and educators across the country. The forms of note-taking styles are numerous with advocates supporting Bam Notes, the Cornell System, Statement Pie, or formal outline. However, the end result of all note systems must be the same: an effective review aid for study. Pauk's (1974) research showed that no notes or copious notes actually made no difference in a student's grades. What did affect test scores was whether or not the students used notes for review. With this in mind, a judgment of the value of a note-taking system most directly relates to the ease with which students can take notes and the ease with which they can study that note-taking system. The T-Note system is easy to take and studyable because it is organized. It is adaptable because it provides a system for recording five types of information typically presented in the classroom.

Organized

The variety of types of information and the range of instructors' teaching styles demand flexibility and adaptability in any note-taking system. Students must be able to listen and to organize meaningful notes rather than just copy what they have heard or viewed. The T-Note system provides this organization. Lecture information is placed on the page according to the types of information it is. First, the student is instructed to use three-ring, notebook paper and to write on one side of each page only.

Then the page of the loose-leaf notebook paper is divided down the center and across the top forming a large "T" which establishes three primary positions for recording information (Figure 1). Across the top in the upper left column is the location for identification of the course, the date, and the note page number. The left column below the top of the "T" is for recording "large" ideas (Figure 2). A large idea is considered to be any word or phrase that will be followed by supporting information. Often this occurs with a cue such as: the three primary causes of the Civil War were.... The large idea is "causes of the Civil War." The cue for the details is the word "three." Thus, the words in the left column become in the students' minds, "What were the three causes of the Civil War?" The details are then written in the right column of the "T." The right column is used for recording details and supporting information. Across from the large idea "the three causes of the Civil War" will come the three details that answer that question. Each specific answer would be placed on a separate line and numbered for quick location and learning during the review session.

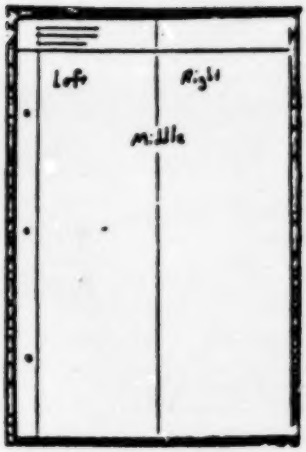

Figure 1

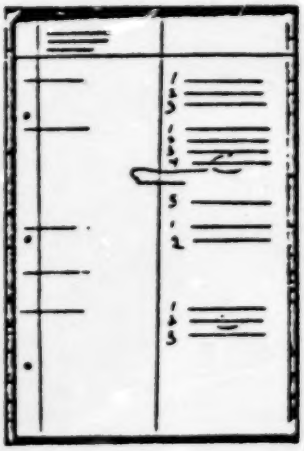

Figure 2

Vocabulary

When students are familiar with the specialized technical vocabulary of a course, many potential learning difficulties, such as loss of memory and poor comprehension, can be dramatically reduced. Technical words or phrases to be learned are easy to locate using the T-Note system because the T-Note method uses the center line as the vocabulary locator. The new vocabulary term should be written across the middle dividing line. The definition or explanatory information should be written into the right column (Figure 3). Such positioning allows the vocabulary terms and definitions to be easily located for review and study. Important terms are often stated by the instructor and then carefully defined. The student should assume that any term carefully defined by an instructor will be included on the next exam.

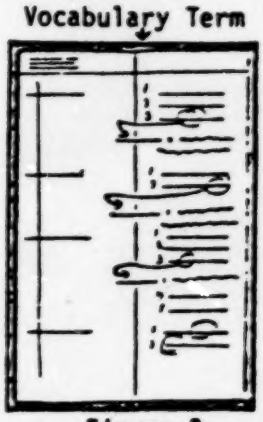

Figure 3

Frequently, the instructor may use a term or phrase during a lecture that the student is not familiar with. That word or phrase should also be marked by circling it. A circled word then signals to the learner that the term should be studied later (Figure 3 above).

Pictorial Information

Recording pictorial information is made easier when following the T-Note plan. Some instructors use one or more kinds of visual

aids during each lecture presentation. Examples of these teacher visual aids are (1) chalkboard drawings, (2) flip charts, (3) transparencies, (4) slides, and (5) filmstrips. When these kinds of information appear, the student can draw these pictorial large ideas into the left column. The visual large idea should consume 1/4 to 1/3 of the notebook page. The descriptive terms or labels should be listed into the right column. Connective lines could be drawn from the picture to the proper descriptive term (Figure 4).

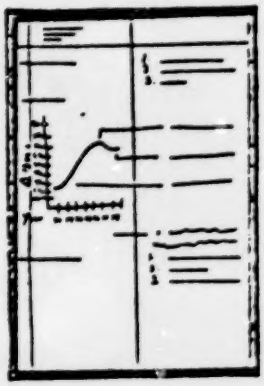

Figure 4

Handouts

Use of a three-ring binder and loose-leaf notebook paper for T-Notes provides the materials for effective placement of teacher handouts. Study of handouts is most effective when studied in the exact sequence as presented during a lecture. A cue to the handout can be placed in the left or large idea column. With a hole punch, the student can position this specific handout and information into the best possible sequence for later review, and at the same time eliminate the possibility of losing the handout.

Examples and General Information

One of the unique features of the T-Note plan is its simple, yet consistent, organizational style; therefore, any deviation from that organizational plan will receive special attention by the student. Examples and other necessary general information are not classified as either large ideas, specific terms, or vocabulary. Recording this

information deviates from the "T" pattern by being placed in a verbatim fashion across the center line filling both the right and left columns. A label (GI-general information; Ex-example, or BKG-background) may be written to the left to assist in quick identification of the type of information positioned there (Figure 5). This information is studied by rereading until it is thoroughly understood. In the case of examples, the information should be studied until the student knows the information well enough to create his own examples to demonstrate the same concept.

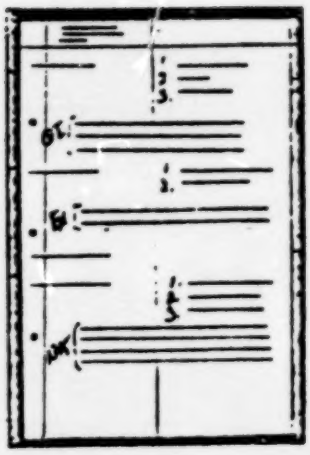

Figure 5

Spacing

Notes are greatly improved when the note-maker deliberately skips a line or two to separate each group of information. This chunking appearance will later aid the recall process (Figures 1-5).

Overlapping

The T-Note system becomes effective for review through overlapping the pages for self-questioning. First the pages are removed from the loose-leaf notebook and placed on a flat surface with only the left column of the "T" showing (Figure 6).

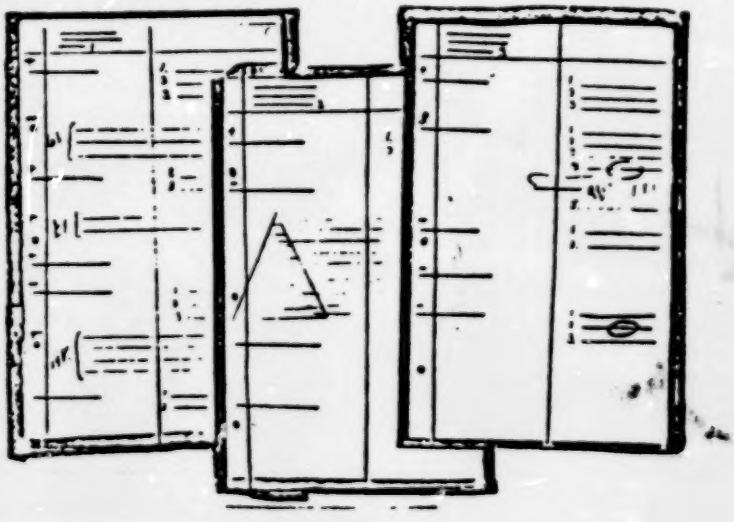

Figure 6/7

The large ideas then become a self-test. The review self-test simulates an actual test situation. Studying this large idea-to-detail step by itself usually assures survival on most exams. The reverse overlap procedure, studying right-to-left, is used to study the details in relation to the main idea.

The overlap review process for self-testing becomes even more effective when combined with a recording of success or failure on the self-test. A simple "+" or "-" beside the large ideas each time they are reviewed can give guidelines to items which should be reviewed further (Figure 7). For example, a student who names only two of the three causes of the Civil War would place a "-" beside the large item. During the next review he would then attempt to recall all three items, finally placing a "+" beside the item when he is successful. Once he has committed to memory all items on the same page, that page can be discarded from the overlap review process. When all the pages have been discarded in both forward and reverse overlap reviews, success on tests is more likely (Figure 8).

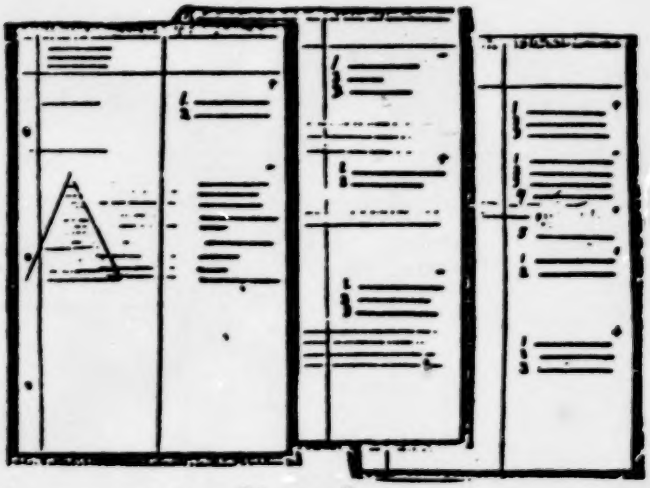

Figure 8

Summary

The T-Note system provides the best features of several note-taking systems. The organization plan provides for placing of large ideas, supporting details, technical vocabulary, visual aids, and

handouts within the pattern. From the T-Note pattern comes two benefits all note-taking systems must have: it is effective for note-taking and it is effective for review. The simple pattern permits students to listen and record notes in an orderly pattern as an instructor lectures. Later, students can review notes taken in the T-Note pattern through self-test made possible by a systematic study of overlapping pages. Through answering questions on the self-test, students gain the knowledge and confidence to be successful on later exams.

Pauk, Walter. How to Study in College. Second Edition. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974.

The resources which follow substantiate one or more elements incorporated into the T Note plan or rationale for its use.

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Carrier, Carol A.; Titus, Amy. "The Effects of Notetaking: A Review of Studies." Contemporary Education Psychology; U 4 N 4 p. 299-314. October 1979

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Titus, Amy A.; Carrier, Carol. "The Effects of Pretraining and Test Mode Expectations on Notetaking." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (64th, Boston, MA, April 7-11, 1980)

ERIC EJ227601

Santa, Carol Minnick; and others, "Effects of Notetaking and Studying on the Retention of Prose," Journal of Reading Behavior; U 11, N 3 p. 247-60. Fall 1979

Biography

Elvis G. Clark has been an instructor of college reading and study skills at Mineral Area College, Flat River, Missouri, since 1967. He was a participant in the 1973 EPDA Institute held in Dodge City, Kansas, for community college teachers of reading and study skills. Committed to development of self-concept, he frequently leads workshops called "Adventures and Attitudes."

Archie D. Davis has been an instructor and director of Reading Services at Illinois Central College, East Peoria, Illinois, since 1974. He directed the 1973 EPDA Institute held in Dodge City, Kansas, for community college teachers of reading and study skills. Believing in the importance of study skills to learning, he frequently teaches inservice workshops for teachers and administrators.

Grzywinski Method:

To facilitate the review process of the classroom notes, a final T is drawn at the end of the days notes (figure 9). This T has a double top line to differentiate it from the days notes. The student uses the left side of the T to write the test questions of the type he can expect to see on the examination (true-false, multiple choice, fill-in, matching, essay, etc.) in that particular course.

The student should be encouraged to complete his test T before leaving the classroom and to write questions he/she will have to read through the days notes. If the student cannot create three to five questions from a days lecture notes, it signals him/her to see the instructor to get the important information from the days class lecture.

Carol M. Grzywinski has been an instructor in study skills and achievement motivation at the State University of New York (SUNY) Agriculture and Technical College, Canton, New York, since 1976. She directs her learning laboratory, coordinates a tutorial program and conducts programs for the reentry students, for students on academic probation and for faculty.